Distance Learning

A Policy Handbook for Schools / Divisions / Districts

Manitoba Education, Training and Youth

Éducation, Formation professionnelle et Jeunesse Manitoba

103-07522/

DISTANCE LEARNING

A Policy Handbook for Schools/Divisions/Districts

2002

Manitoba Education, Training and Youth

Manitoba Education, Training and Youth Cataloguing in Publication Data

374.4097127 Distance learning : a policy handbook for schools/ divisions/districts

ISBN 0-7711-2647-5

1. Distance education—Manitoba.
I. Manitoba. Manitoba Education, Training and Youth.

Copyright © 2002, the Crown in Right of Manitoba as represented by the Minister of Education, Training and Youth. Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, School Programs Division, 1970 Ness Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3J 0Y9.

Every effort has been made to acknowledge original sources and to comply with copyright law. If cases are identified where this has not been done, please inform Manitoba Education, Training and Youth. Errors or omissions will be corrected in a future edition.

This document is available on the Manitoba Education, Training and Youth website at <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ks4/docs/policy/online_learning>.

CONTENTS

Purpose of Document *1*

Introduction *2*

Policy for Distance Learning *3*

Background *3*
Summary Statement of Policy Features *3*
Main Features of the Policy *4*
1. Communication and Consultation *4*
2. Credits for Graduation Requirements *5*
    Compulsory and Optional Credits *5*
3. Funding *7*
4. Development and Delivery of Distance Learning Courses *7*
5. Coordination *7*
    The Managed and Cooperative Distance Learning Environment *8*
    The Distributed Model of Online Distance Learning *8*
    Roles and Responsibilities *9*
6. Peer Review Requirements *11*

Glossary *13*

PURPOSE OF DOCUMENT

The purposes of this document are to

- provide information regarding the role of distance learning within a changing educational environment
- specify the policy for creating and sustaining a distributed model of online distance learning within a managed and cooperative environment
- specify the roles and responsibilities of Manitoba Education, Training and Youth and its partners in developing and implementing a distributed model of online distance learning
- define a peer review process for online distance learning courses

Please refer to the glossary for definitions of terms appearing in this document.

INTRODUCTION

In a rapidly changing educational environment—as new opportunities and technologies for learning become increasingly available—Manitoba Education, Training and Youth is establishing responsive and comprehensive policy for the development and implementation of distance learning courses. In doing so, the Department is guided by three purposes:

1. To ensure flexible and timely responses to the differing needs and situations of school divisions/districts[1] with respect to distance learning courses.
2. To maintain high and consistent standards for student learning across the province.
3. To promote and support a managed and cooperative distance learning environment (see page 8).

[1] For the purposes of this document, the term "school divisions/districts" refers to the governing bodies of schools, including school divisions, school districts, Band-operated schools, and funded independent schools and school authorities.

POLICY FOR DISTANCE LEARNING

Background

Many Manitoba school divisions/districts are refocusing the delivery of education in their jurisdictions based on a variety of influencing factors. These factors include

- small schools and small rural populations
- anticipated teacher shortages, particularly in specialty areas
- the rapid evolution of Internet-based technologies that give educational jurisdictions the ability to offer course content in ways that were not possible before

Many school divisions/districts are looking to distance learning and modern information and communication technologies to offer a partial solution to dealing with these factors.

Manitoba Education, Training and Youth acknowledges its responsibility in providing leadership in the area of distance learning. This leadership responsibility includes the ongoing development and delivery of distance learning courses by the Department and the provision of policy that supports the development and delivery of online distance learning courses by school divisions/districts.

Summary Statement of Policy Features

This policy handbook clarifies the following six issues related to distance learning courses:

1. communication and consultation
2. credits for graduation requirements
3. the funding responsibilities of school divisions/districts and students/parents
4. the desire of school divisions/districts to develop and/or deliver online distance learning courses
5. coordination in support of a managed and cooperative distance learning environment
6. peer review of online distance learning courses

Main Features of the Policy

The six main features of Manitoba's policy for distance learning are discussed below.

1. Communication and Consultation

It is important that students' decisions about participating in distance learning courses be guided by a collaborative decision-making process involving the students, their parents,[2] home school division/district officials, and those offering distance learning courses. The purpose of this collaborative process is to ensure that all parties have the information required to foster sound decision making, as well as to ensure open communication.

To facilitate informed decision making, home school division/district officials are required, to the greatest extent possible, to engage in an information-sharing process with students wanting to register for distance learning courses, and with their parents. The information-sharing process might include a discussion about matters such as the following:

- the appropriateness of a particular distance learning course for the student
- the timely completion of the course credits
- the responsibilities of all parties with respect to providing the necessary student accommodation
- the responsibilities of all parties with respect to the payment of fees
- the roles and responsibilities of the distance learning course deliverer(s)
- the recognition of the distance learning course for credit towards Manitoba's graduation requirements

[2] In this document, the term "parents" refers to both parents and guardians and is used with the recognition that in some cases only one parent may be involved in a child's education.

2. Credits for Graduation Requirements

Distance learning course delivery, particularly online delivery, extends beyond traditional delivery boundaries and raises many questions about how such courses can be recognized for the purpose of attaining credits that satisfy Manitoba's graduation requirements. The following requirements will apply to distance learning courses.

Compulsory and Optional Credits

Students may satisfy a maximum of twenty-eight (28) credits within Manitoba's graduation requirements through distance learning courses.

During the Senior Years, students may complete distance learning courses delivered by a university or college (post-secondary credits) to a maximum of five (5) credits within the 28 credits required for graduation. These credits could be taken from provincial universities or colleges or from out-of-province post-secondary institutions.

Compulsory Credits

Online distance learning courses delivered by Manitoba school divisions/districts will be recognized by Manitoba Education, Training and Youth as **compulsory** credits that satisfy Manitoba's graduation requirements **only** if the following conditions are met:

- Students secure the approval of their home school division/ district prior to registering in the courses. Refusal should be based only on sound educational reasons.
- The courses are based on Manitoba Education, Training and Youth curricula and are recognized for Senior Years credit by the Department subsequent to a required peer review (see page 11).
- Students write the Manitoba Standards Tests for the online distance learning courses they take. Exemptions can be made only in accordance with the Department's current *Policies and Procedures for Standards Tests*, available online at <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ks4/assess/publications/html>.

Schools must offer a minimum of one compulsory credit in a particular subject area, regardless of the number of course credit choices available. For example, schools will have met the requirements if they have offered one of the Applied, Consumer, or Pre-Calculus Mathematics courses at each of the Senior 2, 3, and 4 levels. If a school is unable to offer one of the possible compulsory credits, then the school must make a reasonable effort to find an appropriate alternative means of delivery, pay the associated costs, and provide the necessary student accommodation.

Optional Credits

- Online distance learning courses delivered by Manitoba school divisions/districts will be recognized as **optional** credits that satisfy Manitoba's graduation requirements if they are based on departmental curricula or curricula that have been registered with Manitoba Education, Training and Youth (i.e., school-initiated courses [SICs]).
- Distance learning courses delivered by a provincially accredited organization will be recognized as optional credits that satisfy Manitoba's graduation requirements.
- The student will consult with the school principal before registering in an optional-credit distance learning course. Refusals should be based only on sound educational reasons, such as potential duplication of content from a previous grade. Schools have no obligation for providing accommodation but would have an interest in the student's progress. The student is responsible for associated costs. However, school divisions/districts may choose to offer some financial support.

Course Codes and Designations

The following course codes and designations will apply to distance learning courses. (For specific course codes, please refer to the Department's *Subject Table Handbook: Student Records System and Professional School Personnel*, available online at <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ks4/docs/policy/sth>).

Credit Category	Curriculum Type	Course Code and Designation
Compulsory	Developed by Manitoba Education, Training and Youth	Same as for in-class instruction
Optional	Developed by Manitoba Education, Training and Youth	Same as for in-class instruction
Optional	Registered with Manitoba Education, Training and Youth (SIC)	Same as for in-class instruction
Optional	Out-of-province	Externally developed distance learning course

3. Funding

Regular funding, as provided through Manitoba's funding formula, for in-school students who choose to enroll in distance learning courses will remain with the home school division/district. Any payment of fees on behalf of students enrolled in optional distance learning courses is a local decision. Agreement between the home school division/district and a distance learning course deliverer other than Manitoba Education, Training and Youth must be reached before either party can assume that there will be an exchange of funds.

Home-schooled learners taking distance learning courses are eligible for funding only if they are enrolled in a school and then only for the time in attendance in the school.

4. Development and Delivery of Distance Learning Courses

School divisions/districts may develop and/or acquire distance learning courses. They may also, as a result of local decision making, opt to deliver online distance learning courses to students within and beyond their own boundaries.

5. Coordination

Manitoba Education, Training and Youth will partner with school divisions/districts in creating and sustaining a managed and cooperative environment that supports a distributed model of online distance learning.

The Managed and Cooperative Distance Learning Environment

The managed and cooperative distance learning environment will foster partnerships that reduce duplicate efforts and initiatives and result in the effective use of resources within and across school division/district boundaries. The sustainability of this environment is based on the timely collection and dissemination of information.

Manitoba Education, Training and Youth will collect information pertaining to

- the availability of online courses (e.g., the deliverer and the enrollment capacity)
- peer reviews of online courses
- online course development initiated by school divisions/districts
- online course needs of learners and school divisions/districts

The Department will share this information with all school divisions/districts and thereby enable informed decision making that results in the effective use of resources, all the while addressing the identified needs.

The role of Manitoba Education, Training and Youth in this environment will be the collection and dissemination of information and does not extend to the aggregation of students into classes. This is the responsibility of the school divisions/districts offering online distance learning courses.

The Distributed Model of Online Distance Learning

The distributed model of online distance learning enables students to access course credits from various provincially accredited organizations and to use various delivery models to meet Manitoba's graduation requirements. This model is based on learner needs and tends to integrate traditional school resources, such as the classroom and library, with the delivery of online content. Furthermore, this model offers maximum flexibility to learners and teachers with respect to where and when to enter the learning environment.

Additionally, this model will assist small schools in addressing the challenge of balancing the desire to offer a full range of courses against the financial and human resources that are available. A distributed model of online distance learning, implemented within a managed and cooperative environment, will result in collaboration among school divisions/districts as they aggregate students into classes, which enable teacher assignments.

Implementation of the distributed model of online distance learning will result in a variety of online courses being available for a range of learners located both within and beyond traditional school division/district boundaries.

Roles and Responsibilities

Each partner will have specific roles and responsibilities in implementing the distributed model of online distance learning, as outlined below.

Manitoba Education, Training and Youth will

- create and maintain policy pertaining to distance learning courses
- provide information on the managed and cooperative distance learning environment
- continue to develop and/or acquire and deliver distance learning courses
- support school divisions/districts in the development of distance learning courses that meet departmental requirements
- lead or participate in the peer review process (see page 11)
- provide Manitoba school divisions/districts with access to online distance learning courses
- supply codes for reporting student marks to the Professional Certification and Student Records Unit

School divisions/districts will

- ensure divisional/district compliance with departmental policy and procedures
- participate in the peer review process (as outlined on page 11)
- submit information about online distance learning courses and enrollment capacity to Manitoba Education, Training and Youth for inclusion on the Department's website
- assume financial responsibility for the costs of development, acquisition, adaptation, evaluation, and delivery of distance learning courses within the established funding procedures and formulas of Manitoba Education, Training and Youth
- report Senior Years student marks, as percentage marks only, to the Professional Certification and Student Records Unit of Manitoba Education, Training and Youth

In addition, home school divisions/districts, through their officials, will assume responsibility for students wanting to take distance learning courses, and, therefore, will undertake to

- facilitate discussions that lead to informed decision making for students wanting to participate in distance learning courses (see page 4)
- supply on-site facilitators, particularly for online distance learning courses
- provide access to the appropriate information and communication technologies, including the Internet (required only in the case of compulsory courses)
- ensure that any distance learning course for which a student registers is valid for credit towards Manitoba's graduation requirements
- record the marks students receive in distance learning courses on students' transcripts

6. Peer Review Requirements

The following chart summarizes the peer review requirements for compulsory and optional courses.

Credit Category	Delivery within School Division/District Boundaries	Delivery beyond School Division/District Boundaries
Compulsory (Based on Manitoba Education, Training and Youth curricula.)	• Peer review is optional. (If undertaken, the review will be led by the school division/district, with optional reporting to and involvement of departmental staff.)	• Peer review, led by Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, is required.
Optional (Based on Manitoba Education, Training and Youth curricula or SICs.)	• Peer review is optional. (If undertaken, the review will be led by the school division/district, with optional reporting to and involvement of departmental staff.)	• Peer review is optional. (If undertaken, the review will be led by the school division/district, with optional reporting to and involvement of departmental staff.)

The Manitoba Education, Training and Youth website will include information about all school division/district distance learning courses and indicate whether or not they have been peer reviewed. In order for school division/district-led peer reviews to be included in this information, departmental staff must participate in the peer review and a peer review report must be submitted to the Department.

School divisions/districts may also access distance learning courses from provincially accredited organizations within the limitations set out previously (see page 5). Peer reviews of distance learning courses accessed in this manner are optional. If a peer review is done, it will be school division/district led.

Suggested Guidelines

For a list of Formative Peer Review Criteria and a Summative Evaluation and Sign-Off Form, see *Suggested Guidelines for the Development and Peer Review of Online Distance Learning Courses: A Supplement to Distance Learning: A Policy Handbook for Schools / Divisions / Districts* (Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 2002). This document is also available on the Department's website at <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ks4/docs/policy/online_learning>.

GLOSSARY

Distance learning course—course content for delivery to students using one or more of the following media: print, video, CD-ROM, interactive television, and information and communication technologies (Internet). The student learning materials include

- background content
- guided learning experiences
- assessment tools
- approaches based on the student learning outcomes
- appropriate learning resources

Distance learning course deliverer—an entity that delivers distance learning courses in one or more media. Some distance learning course deliverers are Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, Manitoba school divisions/districts, and various provincially accredited organizations in other jurisdictions.

Distributed learning model—a learning model that enables learners to access course credits from various provincially accredited organizations and to use various delivery models to meet Manitoba Education, Training and Youth graduation requirements. Learners are not bound by school division/district boundaries for accessing learning experiences.

Home school division/district—the school division/district in which a student is registered as of September 30 of a given school year.

Necessary student accommodation—refers to counselling, facilitation, encouragement, access to information and communication technologies (including the Internet), technical support, and so on.

Online course—a distance learning course delivered to students using information and communication technologies. These types of courses are also referred to as web-based courses.

Out-of-province course—a distance learning course that is delivered to students within a Manitoba school division/district by any provincially accredited organization.

Provincially accredited organization—an organization that is accredited by Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, by a department or ministry of education in another Canadian jurisdiction from which distance learning courses can be accessed, or by a university or post-secondary institution registered with the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada or the Association of Canadian Community Colleges.

Suggested Guidelines for the Development and Peer Review of Online Distance Learning Courses

A Supplement to
Distance Learning:
A Policy Handbook for
Schools / Divisions / Districts

Manitoba
Education,
Training
and Youth

Éducation,
Formation professionnelle
et Jeunesse
Manitoba

SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND PEER REVIEW OF ONLINE DISTANCE LEARNING COURSES

A Supplement to
Distance Learning:
A Policy Handbook for
Schools/Divisions/Districts

2002

Manitoba Education, Training and Youth

Manitoba Education, Training and Youth Cataloguing in Publication Data

374.4097127 Suggested guidelines for the development and peer review of online distance learning courses : a supplement to Distance learning : a policy handbook for schools/divisions/districts

ISBN 0-7711-2651-4

1. Distance education—Manitoba. I. Manitoba. Manitoba Education, Training and Youth.

Copyright © 2002, the Crown in Right of Manitoba as represented by the Minister of Education, Training and Youth. Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, School Programs Division, 1970 Ness Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3J 0Y9.

Every effort has been made to acknowledge original sources and to comply with copyright law. If cases are identified where this has not been done, please inform Manitoba Education, Training and Youth. Errors or omissions will be corrected in a future edition.

This document is available on the Manitoba Education, Training and Youth website at <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ks4/docs/policy/online_learning/supplement.html>.

CONTENTS

Introduction *1*

Formative Peer Review Criteria *2*

Summative Evaluation and Sign-Off Form *9*

INTRODUCTION

School divisions/districts planning to develop online distance learning courses are encouraged to form development teams to work together in an ongoing way to

- develop the course materials
- identify appropriate learning resources
- review and revise learning materials continually as they are developed

Experience has shown that working as a team results in a more satisfying experience for the developer(s) than working in isolation. An added benefit is the professional learning opportunities inherent in this process for all members of the development team.

A peer review process is an important component of any distance learning course development model. The process is intended to ensure that distance learning courses

- are consistent with recognized curricula and instructional design principles
- are pedagogically sound and reflect best practices of learning, teaching, and assessment

The peer review process is formative and consists of

1. periodic peer review sessions
2. sign-off by all members of the peer review team for the acceptance of the distance learning course

Cycles within the Development Process

The process of developing distance learning courses consists of two cycles:

1. **Content development cycle:** The content development process, undertaken by the content development team, is characterized by an iterative cycle of creation, review, revision, and editing of content, repeated on a frequency determined by the development team (e.g., after each lesson or series of lessons).
2. **Peer review cycle:** Peer review teams will use a consensus approach in reviewing course content and structure, using the Formative Peer Review Criteria that follow.

FORMATIVE PEER REVIEW CRITERIA

Formative Peer Review of Online Distance Learning Course

Please indicate your assessment of the course content and structure by placing a check mark opposite each criterion listed below. Use additional pages to make specific recommendations or comments that may be of value to the course developer.

Course title: _____

Peer Review Criteria		
A. Overall Considerations	**Meets Expectations**	**Does Not Meet Expectations**
1. The course takes students' backgrounds, ability levels, and expectations into account.		
2. The course follows a modular design.		
3. Students are given explicit instructions on how to proceed.		
4. The language, style, tone, and voice are appropriate for the target audience.		
5. Instructions are straightforward and easy to understand.		
6. The readability of the course is consistent.		
7. Copyrighted material is identified.		
8. Online course:		
a. Content is appropriately "chunked" (divided) for onscreen presentation.		
b. Students have opportunities to interact with content.		

Comments: _____

B. Module: Overview/Introduction	Meets Expectations	Does Not Meet Expectations
1. Students are provided with a rationale for the course and its relationship to the previous course in this subject area, if applicable.		
2. The rationale, learning principles, and/or philosophical statements are congruent with the curriculum.		
3. The learning outcomes of this course correspond with the learning outcomes identified in the curriculum.		
4. A graphic overview or chart illustrates the learning outcomes of this course.		
5. Course material proceeds from what students know by stimulating recall of prior knowledge.		

Comments: _____

C. Module: Body	Meets Expectations	Does Not Meet Expectations
1. Each section includes a brief introduction that relates to the previous section and to the entire module.		
Content		
2. Learning outcomes are stated in concise terms that students can understand.		
3. Copyrighted material is identified.		
4. Content is appropriate to students' ability levels.		
5. Content is accurate, relevant, and current.		
6. Content addresses learning outcomes.		
7. Content is divided into suitable learning "chunks."		
8. Content involves resource-based learning.		
9. Content is appropriate to students' characteristics and experiences.		
10. Content is sequenced appropriately and logically.		
11. Content is free of cultural, racial, religious, sexual, and age biases.		
12. Content integrates the four foundation skill areas of literacy and communication, problem solving, human relations, and technology.		
13. Various media are integrated into the appropriate portion of the module (i.e., overview, body, conclusion).		
14. The media are suitable and interesting.		
15. Special features are included to aid learning (e.g., graphic aids, illustrations, maps, glossary).		
16. New terms are defined in context or in a glossary provided.		
17. The length of each section is appropriate to the priority of the learning outcomes and to the size or weight of the module.		

C. Module: Body (continued)	Meets Expectations	Does Not Meet Expectations
Learning Strategies		
18. Instructions and directions are clear.		
19. Students are given a choice of learning activities.		
20. A variety of appropriate learning activities are provided.		
21. Primary and follow-up learning activities are clearly distinguished.		
22. Learning activities vary in levels of difficulty.		
23. Learning activities facilitate students' active engagement in the learning process.		
24. Online course:		
a. Content includes appropriate links to external resources.		
b. Full (complete) solutions are provided for "homework" assignments.		
c. Tutorials on the use of new software are provided.		
d. Self-test opportunities are provided at appropriate points.		
e. Self-test items include comments for each distracter.		
f. Terms used in context are linked to the glossary.		

Comments: _____

D. Module: Conclusion/Summary and Appendix	Meets Expectations	Does Not Meet Expectations
1. The module conclusion/summary		
a. relates to the module overview		
b. establishes the linkages between sections		
c. transfers students to higher levels of learning		
2. The appendix includes clearly stated answers for the primary and follow-up learning activities.		
3. Where answers may vary, several examples are cited with an explanation.		
4. References for obtaining more information are provided (e.g., Module #, Lesson #, page #).		
5. Each applicable module contains a review page as preparation for a module test or examination.		

Comments: _____

E. Assignments and Tests	**Meets Expectations**	**Does Not Meet Expectations**
1. The course offers a variety of appropriate assignments, directly relating to the learning outcomes stated in the module/section introductions.		
2. Instructions are clear.		
3. The number of assignments is reasonable.		
4. Assignments reflect the priority of learning outcomes.		
5. Assignments reflect the learning approach and methodology used in the course.		
6. The values for each question are clearly identified to assist students in gauging the amount of information needed.		
7. Students are provided with descriptive feedback based on specified criteria so that they can improve their learning.		
8. Online course:		
a. Diagrams for test items are constructed to allow reuse in other items.		
b. Students have opportunities to submit assignments via email.		
c. Test databases have categories corresponding to the module titles and provide a range of items (difficulty and question type) for each module.		
d. Test items provide clear instructions for answering questions and submitting completed work.		

Comments: _____

Additional comments: _____

SUMMATIVE EVALUATION AND SIGN-OFF FORM

Summative Peer Review of Online Distance Learning Course

This form is to be completed by each member of the peer review team as the culminating activity of the peer review process. The list below consists of general review categories and assumes that a formative review process has been completed.

Course title: _____

Consider the following categories as part of your summative review of the course:

- congruence with approved curriculum
- course structure and instructional design
- writing style
- student assessment and evaluation
- learning resources
- copyright
- course developed in WebCT 3.0 or current Department-licensed software

Please identify your suggestions for improvement.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Sign-Off

❑ I have reviewed the course and it is ready for field validation without any substantive changes.

❑ I have reviewed the course and substantive changes are required. My suggestions for changes have been communicated to the course developer.

❑ Once changes are made, I need to review the document again.

_____ _____

Reviewer's Signature Date

Printed in Canada
Imprimé au Canada